

# Two men who made difference by working for less fortunate

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Yakima Herald-Republic editorial board

Dale Carpenter and Tom Chambers lived and worked in two very different worlds; the former was well known in the Yakima Valley business community, the latter was a lawyer who became a justice on the Washington state Supreme Court. Both came from modest means, and both never forgot what it was like to go without. As a result, both worked in their separate ways to help those who were handed the short stick in life. By tragic coincidence, both died of cancer within days of each other — Carpenter on Dec. 6 and Chambers last Wednesday.

Carpenter is a classic bootstraps American success story. He grew up in the Seattle area, one of 10 children of a cook who benefited from the charitable efforts of others. Carpenter moved to the Yakima Valley and worked in sales, and for many years was general manager of Yakima Theatres. But he is best known for his tireless efforts in raising money for local organizations — his father, who accepted charity, also imbued into Carpenter and his siblings an ethic of helping with community service projects.

In his adult years, Carpenter would go on to lead Operation Harvest, the largest food drive in Yakima and help organize Mount Olive Lutheran Church's Feed the 5,000 program, a visible effort to send packaged meals to children in Africa and Latin America. For a number of years, he endured the December chill while camping outside the Summitview Avenue Wray's grocery store to collect items for the Salvation Army's Operation TINCUP. Among his honors was the 2009 Ted Robertson Community Service Award from the Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce.

Chambers was born and raised in Wapato, and he liked to reminisce about swimming in irrigation canals and working on cars in his father's gas station. After graduating from Washington State University and the University of Washington school of law, Chambers had a highly successful practice as a trial lawyer who focused on product and highway safety issues. "I represented real people caught in the grip of the law, usually through no fault of their own," he once wrote.

Chambers won election to the Supreme Court in 2000. As a justice, he wrote for a unanimous court that children in the state's foster care system have a constitutional right to be free from unreasonable risks of harm, the first such state court ruling in the country. As a result, the state reformed its foster care system. He stepped down from the court in 2012.

The Yakima Valley helped shape Carpenter and Chambers, and both of them helped shape the Yakima Valley. The Valley will miss two men who made a difference.

- Members of the Yakima Herald-Republic editorial board are Sharon J. Prill, Bob Crider, Frank Purdy and Karen Troianello.

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